



CITY OF PLEASANT HILL

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GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

Application Guide

WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT?

The General Plan is a long-range, comprehensive plan to guide the day-to-day physical development decisions that shape the social, economic, and environmental character of the City. The City of Pleasant Hill adopted its latest General Plan in 2003. The General Plan contains maps and policies directing the arrangement of land uses and transportation systems to serve the City at full development.

A General Plan amendment is a procedure whereby an applicant may request the City to modify the policies or land use designations contained in the Plan. By state law the General Plan can be amended only four times a year.

The City of Pleasant Hill's ability to grant General Plan amendments was limited by an initiative (Measure B), passed in June 1986. This initiative prohibits rezonings to increase densities or to change land use unless specific conditions are met. By state law zoning on a piece of property must be consistent with the City's General Plan. If the City is prohibited from completing a rezoning by Measure B, it cannot amend the General Plan land use designations in a manner which would cause an inconsistency. Prior to submitting an application for a General Plan amendment, an applicant should first review Measure B, carefully, to determine if the City could grant the request.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC REVIEW FINDINGS FOR A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT?

Any proposal for an amendment will have to be consistent with Measure B and consistent with the policies contained in the General Plan. Although there are not any other specific findings for reviewing a General Plan amendment, the City will consider the effect the proposed amendment will have on service levels of public facilities and how the proposed amendment will better implement the General Plan goals.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

Step 1 Preliminary Review - Prior to submittal of a formal application, it is recommended that the applicant discuss the preliminary proposal with the Public Works and Community Development Department. The staff can, if requested, respond back in writing regarding the project conformity with the General Plan, the environmental concerns, the neighborhood concerns, and other issues potentially involved with the application.

Step 2 Filing the Application - Application for a General Plan Amendment should be made on the Public Works and Community Development Department's Application for Development Review. The application form must be accompanied by the additional supporting materials specified by the Public Works and Community Development Department, including plans, drawings, and other project description information necessary to permit adequate review of the proposed action. A filing fee will be required for each General Plan Amendment application in the amount set by the City Council.

A Public Works and Community Development Department staff member will be assigned to review the application materials for completeness and to prepare a staff report to the Planning Commission. Additional information may be required as staff review of the project progresses.

Step 3 Environmental Review - Most General Plan Amendment applications will require an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). After submittal of a completed Environmental Information Questionnaire by the applicant, an Initial Study will be completed by the staff containing a preliminary evaluation of project relationships to existing General Plan and its potentials for environmental impact. If the Initial Study indicates no significant potentials for adverse environmental effect, a Negative Declaration (a brief statement describing why an environmental impact report is not required) will be recommended for Planning Commission review and City Council approval. If, on the other hand, the Initial Study indicates that significant adverse environmental effects may occur, preparation of focused studies or an EIR may be required for Planning Commission review and City Council certification.

Step 4 Planning Commission hearing - The Planning Commission is required to hold at least one public hearing on the General Plan Amendment application. The hearing does not have to be held within any specified time period, but staff usually schedules the amendment hearings in March, June, September and December. At least ten (10) days prior to the hearing, a notice will be published in the *Contra Costa Times* and notices mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the proposed amendment.

Following completion of required environmental documentation the staff will prepare a report which includes: (1) a description of the proposal; and (2) a summary of its relationship to relevant General Plan provisions, as well as its environmental, land

use, traffic, and other implications. A copy of this report will be sent to the applicant during the week preceding the Planning Commission hearing. Copies will also be available for public review at the Public Works and Community Development Department.

At the public hearing the staff will present its report and recommendations. Testimony from the applicant and other interested persons will also be permitted. The Planning Commission may then close the public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council to approve the request, deny the request, or may postpone the decision or continue the public hearing to a later date so that more information can be provided. Eventually, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the City Council.

Step 5 Following the Planning Commission recommendation, the City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposal along with the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

At the public hearing the staff will present the Planning Commission's report and recommendations. Testimony from the applicant and other interested persons will also be permitted. The City Council will then close the public hearing and make a decision approving or denying the request. On rare occasions, the City Council may refer the application back to the Planning Commission for further review and evaluation.

WHAT MUST BE SUBMITTED?

All submittal information required in the General Submittal Requirements Checklist shall be presented including the Application for Development Review form, the Environmental Information form, and related fees to the Public Works and Community Development Department before the application can be accepted as complete. A letter will be sent to the applicant within thirty (30) days indicating whether the application is complete or incomplete (with reasons), along with the name of the planner processing the application.

MAY A DECISION BE APPEALED?

Because a General Plan amendment is a legislative act, which the City Council makes the final determination, there are no appeal procedures.